



ADDRESSING DELINQUENCY

- Goal(s): The goals of **Module D004: Addressing Delinquency** are:
- To review the importance of a zealous delinquency/elder program
 - To explain *The Peter Plan*, a possible way to deal with member absenteeism in a timely manner
 - To providing training to the various groups involved in *The Peter Plan*

This module consists of:

- A discussion piece titled *Elder Work*
- A document that outlines the process called *The Peter Plan*
- A document titled *Church Attendance Management Software* that lists some possible options for tracking member worship attendance
- Three devotions—*Gentle Restoration*, *The One Thing Needful* and *Take One or Two Others*
- Five bulletin inserts used to promote *The Peter Plan*
- A sample pastor letter to be sent to all members to explain *The Peter Plan*
- A template for Connection Cards, if the congregation would use those as a worship registration system
- A template for *The Peter Plan* report form

What the congregation would need to purchase separately:

- *Go by Grace: A Manual For the Training of Congregational Spiritual Leaders*, available from Northwestern Publishing House

We recommend using the module as follows:

Step 1 – Distribute the discussion piece called *Elder Work* to the congregational leadership.

A discussion piece is something that the Commission on Congregational Counseling intends for people to read on their own. They then come together and discuss it. So Print as many copies as needed and share with your congregational leaders. Encourage them to read it through carefully and make notes. Set a date for those leaders to come together and discuss the document. (It includes some pointed discussion questions at the end.)

Step 2 – Meet to discuss *Elder Work*.

The agenda of that meeting would be as follows:

2a – Open with the devotion *Gentle Restoration*. You could have one person present it. You could have people take turns reading a paragraph. Conclude the devotion with prayer.

3b – Walk through the discussion piece *Elder Work*.

You could simply go part by part and ask if anyone had thoughts or questions. What did they find helpful or insightful?

Conclude this part of the meeting by working through the discussion questions.

2c – Distribute the document titled *The Peter Plan*.

Explain that they should now familiarize themselves with all the steps of *The Peter Plan*. Set the date of the meeting to discuss that process.

2d – Conclude meeting with prayer.

Step 3 – Meet to discuss *The Peter Plan*.

The agenda of that meeting would be as follows.

3a – Open with the devotion *The One Thing Needful*.

3b – Walk through the process of *The Peter Plan*. Discuss what would work in your congregation.

Perhaps the plan can be implemented exactly as it is laid out. If so, the church leaders should set a date for the full implementation of the plan. It will take two to three months to train all the people who will be involved. Much of that time will be used to communicate the process and purpose of *The Peter Plan* to the congregation. We have provided resources to help with that.

Perhaps, you will want to adapt the plan in some way. If so, do it in writing. Set a the date of a third meeting to walk through the modified plan. We have provided a third devotion, *Take One or Two Others*, if this additional meeting is necessary. After that plan is adopted, set a date for the implementation of your plan, taking note of the timeframe described above.

3c – Conclude the meeting with prayer.

Step 4 – Begin training the individuals needed to operate your plan.

The discussion piece *Elder Work* suggests approaching delinquency using a group-within-a-group approach. The larger group is called the Discipleship Committee. It is made up of men and women whose job it is to encourage people who are in the early stages of drifting away from church. Inside the Discipleship Committee is the Board of Elders. They take over when the situation calls for more than simple encouragement, but also admonition and potentially church discipline. (See the discussion piece *Elder Work* for the rationale behind this approach.) If this approach were taken, there are then two groups to train.

The Board of Elders

They could be trained (or have skills sharpened, if they have already been trained) by working through *Go by Grace*. *Go by Grace* has five units. A unit can take approximately two hours.

The Board of Elders will also want to discuss amongst themselves how to administrate the written plan. For example, *The Peter Plan* calls for a head elder to assign “cases” to the other elders. Is that how you will do it? Will you simply divide up the congregation amongst all the elders? Now is the time to think this through. Consult *The Peter Plan* for pros and cons of each approach.

The Discipleship Committee

Members of the Discipleship Committee would want to join the Board of Elders for *Unit 3—Law/Gospel Presentations* and *Unit 4—Active Listening and Handling Objections*. When a Discipleship Committee member meets to encourage delinquent members, those two units might give the DC member some insights about what they might say.

Finally, *both* groups should be given some common sense instruction in how to deal with straying members who return to worship. What needs to be done to make them feel welcome, rather than them feeling like they are on probation?

The Peter Plan Program Coordinator

The Peter Plan calls for one person (or a small team) to enter weekly attendance information into a database. We have listed possible options in the document titled *Church Attendance Management Software*. All of the options will involve a learning curve. Thus, the congregational leadership will want to pick out the software quickly and begin training the individuals who will be entering the data immediately. For help in picking out the software, feel free to contact WELS Technology Office.

Step 5 – Set a date for a congregational open forum to discuss *The Peter Plan* and then work backwards in explaining it.

5a – Seven weeks before the open forum date, begin sharing *The Peter Plan* bulletin inserts.

There are five of them. They are in Microsoft Word so that they can be adapted for your congregation. For example, insert your congregation's name where appropriate. The inserts also state that the congregation is going to use pew worship registers. Your congregation might decide to use Connection Cards instead. Simply change the bulletin inserts accordingly.

5b – Four weeks before the open forum, the time and location of the open forum should be published.

This should be repeated in your congregational bulletin each week. It would probably be beneficial to highlight it in the after worship announcements.

5c – Three weeks before the open forum, the pastor should send out an explanatory letter about *The Peter Plan*.

A sample letter has been included as part of this module.

Step 6 – Launch *The Peter Plan* (or your own written plan) with prayer and joy!

*God's blessings on your efforts!
If you have any questions, please contact your assigned counselor.*